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# Yurchenko defection grows suspect

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The "redefection" of Soviet KGB official Vitaly Yurchenko last November continues to perplex U.S. intelligence officials trying to sort fact from fiction among information he turned over to Western intelligence services.

Both FBI Director William Webster and CIA Director William Casey, with some trepidation, have certified Mr. Yurchenko a bona fide, yet homesick, defector.

Mr. Webster went so far as to state publicly that it would be "an act of folly" for the Soviets to give up valuable information as a means to affect public opinion prior to the Geneva summit last November.

The FBI and CIA have said the intelligence analysis of the Yurchenko case is continuing.

But now intelligence sources say Mr. Yurchenko has become suspect by some intelligence officials, who believe the information he provided, while valuable, lacked the quality of detail that a KGB officer who held the rank of "general-designate" could turn over to the West.

Officials say Mr. Yurchenko's early career as a navigation officer on a submarine does not fit the career path of an upper-echelon KGB official. According to a biography released by the CIA, Mr. Yurchenko was responsible for everything from KGB North American operations to training border guards in Moscow.

"He did everything but run the war in Afghanistan," one intelligence expert quipped.

His biggest jump was from security officer at Moscow's Washington embassy to counterintelligence chief of the KGB's foreign intelligence directorate, the largest spying operation outside the Soviet Union.

The most difficult problem facing U.S. intelligence officials has been sorting out the damage to U.S. intel-

ligence from Mr. Yurchenko's return. With both FBI and CIA officials convinced, at least publicly, of Mr. Yurchenko's sincerity, intelligence sources say Mr. Yurchenko's reports on the U.S. agent networks were "vague."

They say an official in Mr. Yurchenko's position would have known the exact names of agents working for the Soviets.

"At a minimum, he should have given up the entire North American 'illegal' network," said one intelligence expert who doubted Mr. Yurchenko's credibility when reports of the case first surfaced last summer. Illegals are agents operating under deep cover and using non-diplomatic communications networks to communicate with Moscow.

One senior intelligence official said a key indicator that Mr. Yurchenko was a fake defector dispatched by Moscow was the unusual Nov. 4, 1985, press conference held two days after he escaped from the custody of CIA security agents.

A legitimate defector would never have been permitted the freedom to answer questions, much less in Washington, the official said.

The official also noted that when Mr. Yurchenko was granted immediate entrance to the Soviet Embassy compound in upper Georgetown after leaving a dinner, "they were expecting him."

He speculated that Mr. Yurchenko's return following a relatively short, three-month period of being "in place" may have been prompted by certain information he obtained and that required his immediate return.

Newsweek magazine, citing intelligence officials, reported last month that U.S. officials have been given leads to "dozens and dozens" of Soviet agents in the United States, including journalists on the KGB's payroll and others who serve as agents of influence.

Yet to date, the only arrest to come directly from Mr. Yurchenko was former National Security Agency analyst Ronald Pelton, who was charged with providing top secret information on U.S. electronic listening posts.

Former CIA operations trainee Edward Howard fled the country from under an FBI net after leads from Mr. Yurchenko revealed he had offered secrets to the Soviets. FBI Director Webster said the FBI was planning to arrest Mr. Howard "within hours" of the time he disappeared.

Both men were described by intelligence sources as "dead cases," given up by the Soviets in order to establish Mr. Yurchenko's bona fides.

One source said Mr. Yurchenko succeeded in casting aspersions on the CIA and its director, created a reactionary "spy scare" in the United States, and succeeded in setting a negative example for would-be KGB defectors during an important preliminary period in the reign of Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev.